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ABSTRACT

The Swedish ethnic theatre in the United States flourished and provided a vigorous cultural expression among Swedish immigrants for over five decades beginning in San Francisco in 1863. Swedes in Chicago alone produced between 9 and 24 plays per season from 1888 to 1915. All over the United States, Swedish settlements had their own Swedish theatres, which produced plays primarily from Sweden. Characters in Swedish-American plays were easily recognizable and audiences particularly loved the cuntry yokel. The most popular play was "Varmlanningarna," a six-act national romantic folk play with a melodramatic plot. By the 1890s, theatre groups and audiences were recruited from the immigrants who had not known theatre back in Sweden. The only actor to make a living for an extended time was Hjalmar Peterson, known as "Olle from Laughtersville," who formed a company of up to twenty performers. The 1930s brought a decline in the Swedish ethnic theatre, primarily due to the gradual loss of the use of the Swedish language. (MKM)

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SWEDISH THEATRE IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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INTRODUCTION

Although the Swedish theatre in the United States was smaller and less established than some other ethnic theatres in America--e.g., the French theatre of New Orleans and the Yiddish theatre of Chicago--it deserves more attention than it has hitherto been given. It flourished in "Swede towns" across the States, from Seattle, Washington, to Jamestown, New York, remaining a vigorous cultural expression among Swedish immigrants for over five decades. Nevertheless, except for Henriette Naeseth's exemplary study of Swedish theatre in Chicago, very little has been published on the subject.¹ As Naeseth points out, the reasons for this lack of published treatments are several: the strong religious opposition among certain Swedish immigrant groups to anything theatrical, the general tendency to treat theatre as a passing pleasure rather than as a cultural activity worthy of permanent record, the fact that most Swedish theatre groups were non-professional, and--perhaps most of all--the difficulty of collecting and interpreting the large amount of pertinent data.² All over the United States, Swedish settlements had their own Swedish theatres. In addition, one Swedish company toured from coast to coast. The primary source material--much of it in the form of clippings, scrapbooks, playbills, and personal memorabilia--is therefore dispersed throughout the country.

Although the subject has discouraged treatment, scholars agree on its significance. Naeseth emphasizes the contribution of the immigrant culture to the American cultural heritage. Others see it playing a significant role in reconciling the culture of the Old Country with that of the New. Theatre was, in fact, a typical immigrant phenomenon which, along with the foreign language press, served specific immigrant needs. Dr. Theodore C. Blegen, the eminent Norwegian immigration scholar, sees the establishment of [Norwegian] theatre groups in the U.S. as a means to accomplish "a transition of Old Country culture to the new world of the immigrants and their descendants."³

Though the general development and many particular features of the various Swedish theatre groups across the U.S. can justifiably be expected to be similar --Naeseth even argues the applicability of her findings to other foreign language theatres in the U.S.⁴--there is enough divergence to justify a number of local studies. In-depth studies, patterned on Naeseth's work about Chicago theatre, should be made of all other Swedish theatre centers in the U.S. Two particularly promising centers~~are~~ the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and the Pacific Northwest around Seattle.⁵ There is additional motivation for undertaking such studies at this time, before the last of the men and women who were themselves once involved have died and left their stories untold.

Having established the need for a thorough documentation of Swedish theatre in the U.S., I hasten to add that this chapter only indirectly can help fill that need. (After all, what can one chapter cover, when a whole volume has been written about the Swedish theatre of Chicago alone!) What it can do--aside from point out the need for and direction of future research in the field--is, first, to present an overview of the Swedish theatre in America in general terms and, second, to illustrate that development in terms of a specific group. The group which I will discuss in some detail is a Minneapolis-based touring company called the Olle i Skratthult Company. Very little has been published about this group.⁶ Naeseth mentions it briefly, and only in reference to its Chicago appearances. My main source has been Olga Lindgren-Nilsen, member of the Olle i Skratthult Company 1916-1933, and now living in St. Paul.

OVERVIEW

If with Swedish ethnic theatre we understand the performance of a play in the Swedish language, usually for and by Swedish immigrants, the Swedish ethnic theatre in the U.S. dates back to the early 1860s. The first recorded performance in Swedish took place in San Francisco in 1863, when the Scandinavian Club put on a play called

Stockholm, Västerås, Uppsala.⁷ The first theatrical activity in Chicago is recorded for March 7, 1868, when Svea Theatrical Society performed two short farces, Bättre aldrig än sent (Better never than late) and Husvill för sista gången (Turned out for the last time).⁸ In Minneapolis, Skandinaviska Föreningen (The Scandinavian Society), active 1869-1873, was responsible for the first performances in the Scandinavian languages.⁹ The heyday was generally reached in the 1890s and early 1900s--the actor-chronicler Ernst Behmer gives the years 1899-1915 for Chicago¹⁰--although there was continued growth into the 1920s. The 30s brought general decline, due partly to the Depression, partly to the advance of the cinema, and, above all, to the gradual loss of the Swedish language. Some continuation of spoken drama was seen in the subsequent decade, although usually in the form of skits instead of full-length plays. A small group of semi-professional performers bought the old Furuby School in Center City, Minnesota, where they entertained under the name "Furubyklubben." The leader Denny Magnusson and his wife Hazel performed, e.g., the skit "Hos fotografen" (At the photographer's).¹¹ But the general climate for ethnic theatre deteriorated with World War II. In Iowa, for example, it was forbidden to congregate and speak any language other than English.¹² Immigrants vied with each other denouncing their roots. ("I'm not Swedish, but my sister Minnie is," as the youngest child in a large Swedish-American family told her teacher.) After the war, the situation improved, and in the 60s and 70s, ^{Swedish Americans} began to take pride and interest in their ethnic heritage. Today, they can still enjoy unpretentious dramatic fare: monologues, skits, and recitations. But full-length plays are beyond what most Swedish-American groups can and wish to produce. Even the "dramatic societies" of the various lodges are satisfied with socializing and an occasional play reading--understandable, when you consider that most of the members in these "societies" are now in their sixties and seventies.

There are a few Swedish language productions in colleges and universities, but these are usually mounted by Departments of Scandinavian as a teaching aid. In addition, an occasional contemporary professional production from Sweden is sent over to tour the U.S. under the auspices of the Swedish Information Service. The last such production was of Marknadsafton (Eve of the fair) by Vilhelm Moberg, better known as the author of the emigrant epic about Karl-Oskar and Kristina. For various reasons, the tour was not a success. A problem with any Swedish language production ^{today} is that most Swedish Americans do not speak Swedish well enough to understand a play. In addition, plays and performers sent out from Sweden, however excellent, **often lack** the approval and community support granted local efforts.

THEATRE IN SWEDEN

Initially, and for some time, theatre among the Swedes in America was as faithful a copy of the theatre from "home" as could be achieved. Repertoire and acting style reflected the current standard in Swedish theatre. Throughout the years, the Swedish-American theatre imported most of its plays, even scripts, from Sweden. Swedish theatre repertoire was light: part melodrama, part comedy or farce, part national historical romantic drama, ^{with} a sprinkling of Shakespeare and other classics. Most plays produced in Sweden were plays imported from Germany and France, by authors like Eugene Labiche and Johannes Nestroy, which were translated and sometimes adapted by the addition of local color. The importations reflected current taste but also economic necessity: before the passing of copyright laws, translation and adaptation of foreign playwrights was easier and cheaper than encouraging native talent. One illuminating example ~~from~~ the repertoire is August Säfström's 2-act comedy Bror Jonathan eller Oxhandlaren från Småland (Brother Jonathan or The ~~ox~~dealer from Småland) (1860), which was a translation of the

French L'Oncle Baptiste (Uncle Baptiste), which was an adaptation by Emile Souvestre of a German play, F. Kaiser's Stadt und Land (City and Country)(1859).¹³ Production style--depending on the play--was melodramatic, broadly farcical, declamatory, or "cup and saucer realism," and sets and costumes were often ludicrously lavish.

In his short story "~~A National Institute for Education,~~"
the young author August Strindberg offers a satiric description of the foreign influence and the rampant artifice in the Swedish theatre of the 1870s, a theatre which was not yet ready for playwrights like himself. He takes us to a meeting of the Play Selection Committee of the Royal National Theatre.

The head of the Marine Pilot Association has dramatized a short story from the French fashion magazine Le Printemps, and the National Dramatic Arbiter has touched it up, naming it The Duchess. There is an excellent role for the Duke and six toilettes for the Duchess. Everything augurs the success of the play.../- - - The National Exchequer then reminds everyone that a cabbage bin with Swedish original plays is sitting around unplayed. The Chairman asks the National Dramatic Arbiter if he has read them and, when the latter replies in the affirmative, orders the Doorman to carry the cabbage bin up into the attic. Why Swedish original plays are kept in cabbage bins no one has yet been able to figure out.¹⁴

Strindberg also describes a visit to the theatre. The unsophisticated M.P. Håkan Ohlsson is taking his family to the National Theatre.

On the program is Monsieur Jean, a three-act comedy translated from the French by Cassacko (nom de plume of the National Dramatic Arbiter). The curtain rises on an endless expanse of fake Oriental carpet spread with canapés and a fireplace with clock.

The chambermaid enters in a silk dress, looks in a rose-colored billet and says something you can't hear. Mr. Anatole enters through another door and kisses her on the shoulder. Mr. Anatole is dressed in elegant walking stick with gold knob, pince-nez, cigarette machine, and an enormous watch fob. His shirt is cut "all the way down to the clavicles," as Mr. Ohlsson later puts it. Anatole rolls a cigarette and says something to the chambermaid. Then the Marquise enters, waves to the chambermaid, who immediately understands and therefore leaves. They are alone.

-Sir!

-Madame la Marquise!

Anatole puts down the cigarette machine and picks up the walking stick.

-What gives me the honor of such an early visit?

Anatole is whipping his trousers with the stick.

-To be perfectly frank I don't know, Madame la Marquise, what entitles you to ask such a question.

-Your absence would entitle you to ask me why your presence does not entitle me to ask you!

("What dialogue: brilliant!" Faint applause!--)

Anatole crosses the fake Oriental diagonally, affixes his pince-nez, whips a sofa with his stick and says, his back to the Marquise:

-Because I love you.¹⁵

Not until the 1910s, and heralded by the brief experiment of Strindberg's Intimate Theatre (1907-1910), ~~does~~^{did} Swedish theatre change. Side by side with the conventional repertoire are found two new developments. One ~~is~~^{was} the non-naturalistic production of serious drama. Strindberg and Ibsen are finally acceptable in the mainstream theatre. The guest performances by Max Reinhardt's (1911, 1915, and 1917) company, particularly his expressionistic production of Strindberg's Ghost Sonata in 1917, were widely admired and copied. The other development is the so called folk theatre, theatre by and for "the people," linked with the adult education program of the Labor Movement. These two developments are both reflected in Swedish-American theatre, the interest in Strindberg and Ibsen comparatively soon, the folk theatre after a considerable delay. (The Chicago Arbeter Teater [Worker's Theatre] was founded in 1928, the Svenska Folkteatern [Swedish Folk Theatre] in October, 1929.)¹⁶ Swedish theatre in the 1920s is also characterized by its responsiveness to the new Continental "isms" in staging: expressionism, futurism, surrealism. These movements were, however, never felt in Swedish America. Past a certain point, growth and ^{new} productions were replaced by stagnation and revivals.

SWEDISH-AMERICAN REPERTOIRE

To begin with, the Swedish-American theatre offered the same plays as theatre in Sweden. Both repertoires describe a progression from historical romantic drama plus comedy to more contemporary drama in the 1910s. In the 1920s, the two diverge, Swedish-American theatre reverting to ^{primarily} innocuous entertainment and revivals of old favorites. At all times, the overwhelming majority of all plays produced in Swedish America were comedies, many of them farces of French or German origin. The characters were easily recognizable and "translateable" types: the old dowager,

the foolish husband, his flirtatious wife, the comic policeman, the honest country lad, etc. They draw on age-old types, but belong in the fixed sphere of 19th century popular drama: ostensibly modeled on life, yet totally predictable embodiments of the clash between rural and urban man, between labor and bourgeoisie. The Swedish-American audiences particularly loved the country yokel. Perhaps this love was merely a reflection of the contemporary Swedish vogue for bondkomik (rural comedy). The bondkomiker (rural comedian) may represent urbanized man's country cousin, in other words, the clash between agrarian and industrialized society.¹⁷ By extension, the laughter at the bondkomiker may express the condescension of the "advanced" Swedish American towards his "backwards" countrymen back in Sweden. Perhaps it is even the laughter of the urbanized immigrant at his own rural self before **the** emigration.

The most popular play in all of Swedish America was not a farce, however, but the folk "opera" Värmlänningarna (The People of Värmland) (1846), with text by F. A. Dahlgren and music by A. Randel.¹⁸ An established favorite in Sweden, it made its American debut in Chicago in 1884. Between 1884 and 1921, it received at least 62 performances in Chicago alone, and at least 12 more between 1921 and 1950. In the 47 years up to and including 1931, it was a regular fall feature in Chicago for all but five of those years.¹⁹

Värmlänningarna is a 6-act national romantic folk play with melodramatic plot, much sentiment, music and singing, dancing, and elements of rustic comedy. The hero, Erik, is prevented by his rich parents to marry his true love, Anna, the poor cotter's daughter. They betrothe him instead to the rich but haughty Britta. When Anna hears the banns for Erik and Britta being read in church, she goes (temporarily) mad, and throws herself in the lake. Anna and Erik (nearly) drown, but are finally united against a backdrop of provincial festivities. The play requires a large and experienced cast of trained singers, actors, and folk dancers; elaborate sets; several set changes; folk- and period costumes; and an orchestra. The three central roles--Erik, Anna, and the comic lead Löpar-Nisse (Running Nick)--were the touchstones of any actor or

actress in the Swedish and Swedish-American theatre. The relative merits of different Annas were hotly debated: this one was convincingly mad, yet this other one had the prettiest voice, and so forth. It was to play the role of Anna again that Anna Pfeil in 1908 traveled from her home in Seattle to Chicago, and in 1911 she came out of retirement to portray Anna for the 500th time.²⁰

The appeal of the play is undeniable, but it is perhaps surprising that a play demanding such elaborate and exacting production should be the enduring favorite. But it provided a satisfying group experience for a large number of performers. It was sure to attract large crowds wherever it played, and it was --not surprisingly-- frequently taken on tour to other Swedish-American communities.²¹ And perhaps, above all, it had become a tradition.²² It kept its hold on the Swedish-American theatre goers because it symbolized not only their Swedish past, but also their past as Swedes in America.²³ It was last seen in Chicago in 1946 and 1950. There was talk in several places around the U.S. about reviving Värmlänningarna for the Bicentennial. To that purpose, at least one new translation was made,²⁴ but what became of these efforts is not clear. It was perhaps felt that a production of this play would commemorate the past of the Swedes in America, but not sufficiently demonstrate the Swedish contribution to the United States.

Most interesting from the American point of view are ^{perhaps} the plays that deal with the immigrant experience, reflecting the Swedes' gradual assimilation into American society. These plays are topical, often set in specific American locales and peopled with immigrant types. In plot and genre, however, they are mostly traditional farces. The characters are comic types, and the immigrant experience is usually lightly treated. Social, economic, and political questions are rarely raised. Unlike much of the Swedish-American press, the theatre of the Swedish Americans was, on the whole, a conservative force. The most tendentious drama was that produced by labor groups and Good Templar lodges, who carefully selected their repertoire to educate and edify.²⁵

A brief list of titles from the Chicago repertoire reflects the gradual change in the immigrant's position.²⁶ To begin with, we find the immigrant's bewildering encounter with the New World in plays like Emigration (1871), Herr Petter Jönssons resa till Amerika (Mr. Peter Johnson's voyage to America)(1875),²⁷ Pelle Pihlqvists Amerika-resa (Pete Pihlqvist's trip to America)(comedy with song, 1890), and Pelles första natt i Amerika (Pete's first night in America)(1892). Then follows acclimatization, as seen in Ernst Behmer's Anna-Stina i Chikago (1899), Anton i Amerika (1933), and the musical revues Kolingarras lustresa i Amerika (The bums' tour of America)(1912) and Storstädning på Snusboulevarden (The big cleanup on Snoose Boulevard)(1930).²⁸ The next step introduces Swedish-Americans returning "home," usually comically puffed up and well-to-do: När Smed-Erik och Pligg-Jan fick Amerikafrämmande (When Erik Blacksmith and Jan Shoemaker had company from America) (1932), Miss Persson från USA (Miss Person from the U.S.A.)(1934), and even one about a Swede who inherits a rich relative in America, Karlson får Amerikaarv (Karlson's America inheritance)(1932). In this last group belongs also one of the few plays treating the immigrant question seriously, the five-act play Härute (Out here)(1919), which deals with the lack of understanding for the Swedish Americans on the part of the Swedes "at home."

PERFORMERS AND AUDIENCES

The first Swedish theatre groups in America were founded by educated immigrants of good family, who harbored no pietistic prejudice against theatre. Their audiences were drawn from the same circle, a circle that also formed lodges and societies, arranged charity soirées, and gave poetry recitals. Most Swedish immigrants, however, were uneducated rural folk, who had come to America precisely for its economic and educational opportunities. They had perhaps never seen a play, much less participated in one. ^{But} beginning in the late 1890s, the composition of theatre groups and audiences changes. From being elitist outgrowths of lodge or club

activities, theatre groups grow in size and mass appeal. Audiences--and eventually performers--are now recruited from those very immigrants who had not known theatre back in Sweden, but have since "come up in the world." The larger, more democratic, audiences contribute toward a shift in repertoire toward lighter fare. In the 1910s and 20s, the majority of Swedish immigrants were single men and women from urban areas. These young people had a certain familiarity with theatre and even helped form new groups with socialist leanings, for example, Folkteatern in Chicago.

Most groups lacked strong and separate identities, the actors (and even directors) often flitting from group to group. Companies were born and dissolved overnight. A few flourished for a decade or more. One group in San Francisco even celebrated its 30th anniversary, a fact noted with amazed approbation.²⁹ The bonding agent was usually a strong individual or couple of extraordinary dedication and ambition, from which follows that when the leader stepped down, disorganization or disbanding followed. Among the most talented and energetic leaders in Chicago were the actor Christian Brusell, the actor-author Ernst H. Behmer, the first American Strindberg translator Edwin Björkman (later moved to New York), Mrs. Ottilie Myhrman, and the two couples Victor and Emma Nilsson and Carl and Anna Pfeil. In Minneapolis, leading names included Vilma and Axel Sundborg, Hjalmar Petterson, John A. Johnson, and Paul Fröjd (later moved to Chicago).³⁰

Almost all of Swedish America's entertainers, be they actors, singers, or musicians, were not professional in the sense of supporting themselves as performers. Even the company leaders had to work at "something else" intermittently. The very talented actor and director Carl Pfeil, for many years a leading figure in Chicago Swedish theatre, supported himself as travel agent, editor, storekeeper, inventor, etc.³¹ A few were able to combine their love for the theatre with their daily work, notably journalists from the liberal Swedish-American press, like the legendary Magnus Elmlad and Gustaf Wicklund, who provided translations, adaptations, and

original plays for the Swedish language theatre. (It was Wicklund who did the much acclaimed translation of H.M.S. Pinafore for the 1896 production in Chicago.)

Although there is no doubt that the quality of acting varied widely within each group and within each performing cast, the leaders and "stars" of the Swedish-American stage were both talented and trained. Many had had stage experience before they came to the U.S. Occasional guest performers from Sweden continued to bring glamour, professionalism, and fresh inspiration to the groups in America. The Swedish actor August Lindberg and his young son Per visited Chicago and Minneapolis for the 1910-11 season. He directed and acted in a highly praised production of Strindberg's Gustav Vasa, in which the ^{level of the} acting was particularly noted.³² Nevertheless, only a few Swedish performers became professional actors, effectively prevented by the relatively limited size of their "market." Those who went on to professional careers worked almost without exception on the English-speaking stage, e.g., Hilma Nelson, who joined Augustin Daly's company in 1892, and Arthur Donaldson, best known for his portrayal of the title character in The Prince of Pilsen.³³ One exception was Hjalmar Peterson, better known as Olle i Skratthult, who expanded his Swedish market by taking his company on tour.

Swedish-American theatre audiences were never sophisticated. Used to farces and light comedies, their habitual response was laughter--whether the play was serious or comic. "Persons who understand dramatic art about as well as Zulus appreciate Raphael's Madonna should never be permitted to enter a theatre," wrote one irate reviewer.³⁴ Sometimes the disparity between the effect intended and the effect achieved caused legitimate merriment, as in the one production of Hamlet attempted by the Chicago Swedes.

Holson [the backer] found the play so dull that at one point he waved the actor aside and performed a jig, "to liven up the audience a bit." - - - Other tales of the performance have also, perhaps, grown with the years-- of Ninian Waerner playing the ghost and punctuating the revelation of murder by spitting at regular intervals; of the slain Laertes being left outside the curtain, and crawling under it to join the other corpses, leaving

his wig behind him. The graveyard scene provided another amusing story. The lights went out, and the first clown, asking the second clown (Schoultz) where he was, was answered in sepulchral tones that reached the audience, "On the other side of the grave."³⁵

Less legitimate was the laughter that traditionally greeted Anna's mad scene ^{outside the church} in Värmlänningarna. So much of a tradition was this misplaced laughter that it was cause for comment when, in 1925, the singing of "A mighty fortress is our God" by the Swedish Glee Club prevented the usual laughter in the church scene.³⁶

It should be added that a large segment of the Swedish population in America never went to the theatre at all because of religious scruples against such sinful frivolity. A lengthy debate, reminiscent of that in England in the 1690s and the U.S. in the late 1700s, was carried on in Hemlandet, a conservative paper with ties to the Augustana Synod. Theatre was "the Devil's device," inducing to crime and immorality.

AMERICAN INFLUENCES

By the turn of the century, the American theatre scene was dominated by Syndicate-produced touring shows: huge, lavish, and carbon-copied. The prevailing style was realism/naturalism, achieved with sophisticated lighting techniques and mechanical ingenuity. With such shows the smaller ethnic groups could not compete. But there were sidelong glances. The contemporary taste for spectacle prevailed over limited resources and resulted in surprisingly handsome sets and costumes. Reviews often mention the scenic elements (possibly reflecting the reviewer's reluctance to mention anything else). Fritz von Schoultz, founder of Svenska Dramatiska Sällskapet (The Swedish Dramatic Society) in Chicago and proprietor of a large costume house, provided "excellent costumes from Schoultz."³⁷ Scenery for major productions, e.g., Värmlänningarna, was ordered from professional studios in Chicago or New York.

From ca 1890 into the 1910s, the thirst for spectacle was more easily satisfied,

because sponsoring lodges would rent legitimate theatres for their performances. Drawbacks were the cost and the need to find other halls for rehearsals. Eventually legitimate theatre rents went too high, and the ethnic groups had to go back to their less well equipped lodge halls and auditoriums--with the advantage that rehearsals and performances now could be held in the same place. Few ethnic organizations had enough money to build theatres of their own. Those that were built, such as the solid and well-appointed Dania Hall of Minneapolis--finished and still standing--in 1886¹ were more on the order of all-purpose halls. Aside from the theatre, located on the second floor, Dania Hall houses a smaller meeting hall, numerous rooms, and kitchen facilities. The floor of the theatre auditorium is characteristically unraked and without permanent seats, so that it can be used for dancing, etc. In floor plan, set changing mechanics, and scenery, Dania Hall shows influence from contemporary American theatre. A horseshoe-shaped balcony is perched above the auditorium floor. Flat wings are held in grooves on the stage floor by grooved slats clamped down on the top of the flat.

^{however,}
In repertoire, there was little influence from the American theatre. Swedish-American groups either imported plays from Sweden or wrote their own plays. The only notable overlap lay in the area of British classics, admired equally by Swedes, Americans, and Swedish-Americans. Thus the Chicago Swedes produced Hamlet (1885), Taming of the Shrew (1904), and H.M.S. Pinafore (1896).³⁸

SWEDISH-AMERICAN CHARACTERISTICS

Although trying hard to be an extension of contemporary theatre in Sweden, Swedish-American theatre came to develop certain characteristic features. It has already been noted that it was largely non-professional, its audiences more "democratic." It was vigorous and far-reaching. There are no statistics to tell how many Swedish Americans were touched by the theatre, either as participants or as audience members. But the number of productions mounted is awesome: during the

peak period 1888-1915, Swedes in Chicago alone produced between 9 and 24 plays a season, with twenty or more during eight of the seasons.³⁹ In Sweden there was no corresponding popular theatre movement. It is tempting to speculate about the reasons for this difference: One may have been the generally liberating effect the the United States had on the Swedish immigrant. Another could have been that many Swedish-American cultural personalities were what Naeseth calls "gifted and engaging scapegraces," men and women whose talent, initiative, and restlessness had made them "black sheep" at home but added flair and excitement to their work "over here."⁴⁰ Yet another may have been the Swedish-American theatre's overlaid function as preserver of ethnicity.

Another distinguishing feature was the teater med bal format, literally, "theatre with ball." In order to draw large audiences, any performance--of variety show, choral concert, or play--might conclude with bal, i.e. public dancing. After the final curtain, all seats in the "orchestra" were cleared away for the dancing, which lasted until midnight. The bar provided refreshments, sometimes quite alcoholic. (Add thereto that performances were most often scheduled for Sundays--the working man's only day off--and one understands better the opposition of the Lutheran church to the dramatic activities of the immigrants.)

By ^{its} teater med bal format ^{Swedish-American theatre} encouraged family participation far more than ~~did the~~ ^{of family audiences} ~~was~~ contemporary Swedish theatre. One indication⁴¹ that Swedish texts were "cleaned up" for Swedish-American audiences. The Olle i Skratthult Company was cited for its clean and wholesome entertainment and prided itself on never using swear words.⁴¹ A case in point is the comic song "Flickan på Bellmansro" (The Girl at Bellmansro) about a suitor promising to return but instead taking off, leaving the girl with an illegitimate child. Both the recorded and the printed version available in the U.S. leave out the verse about the child.⁴²

THEATRE AND THE SWEDISH LANGUAGE

The Swedish language was, of course, central to the Swedish theatre in the U.S. In many cases it was the only thing Swedish about the play offered, since the repertoire taken from Sweden--with the obvious exception of national-romantic products--largely consisted of Continental imports. Thus the playbills in Swedish America--En natt i Falkenberg, Andersson, Petterson och Lundström, Öregrund-Östhammar, Tre förälskade poliskonstaplar--reflect not so much a love for French farce as a desire to keep the umbilical cord with the mother country uncut.⁴³ Theatre was encouraged precisely because it fostered pride and interest in the Swedish language, which in turn was a link with the Old Country. In the language resided a large portion of the immigrants' "Swedishness." The language question debate raged around 1900: should one or should one not preserve the Swedish language in America? One argument for preservation was that

a people that demonstrates no ability to resist, no conservatism, cannot exert any lasting influence on others. It would therefore be a bad sign, if our Swedish-American people underwent this process [a complete change to English] too rapidly.⁴⁴

Like any language-based activity, theatre was doomed when the language faded. Eventually Swedish America, like all other immigrant communities, experienced what Hasselmo calls "the great language shift."⁴⁵ In the late 20s and early 30s, church services and instruction changed from Swedish to English. The young people of Center City, Minnesota, were confirmed for the last time in Swedish in 1929.⁴⁶ Some Swedish performers chose not to compromise their Swedishness. Some were so inextricably linked with their ethnic material that English was simply out of the question. But for others, the opportunities of the American stage were too great to pass up. Some performers were equally effective in both languages, yet others tried but failed to conquer the English language. (The talented couple Pfeil from Chicago were held back because of Anna Pfeil's difficulties with English.)⁴⁷

The transitional stage of "the great language shift" made its mark in the theatre. "Mix-language" was a ready source of laughter, and several Swedish-

American comedians derived much of their material from linguistic misunderstandings. The singer and monolog artist Charles Widdén straddled the language fence comfortably and also used "mix-language," as in the routines "Peterson at the Turkish bath" and "Olle ve' Kvarna i Amerika."⁴⁸

John A. Johnson of St. Paul, Minnesota, better known as "Johan i Knuten," was another comedian who capitalized on the language shift for comic effect. For a performance in Marine, Minnesota, in 1916 he was billed as "Singing and Talking Broken English."⁴⁹

Mix-language comedy in ethnic theatre is a sign of decline. It is an ephemeral form, because it can only be enjoyed by a bilingual generation. Once that generation is gone, mix-language comedy is dead. In Swedish-American theatre, mix-language humor flourished ^{from} the 1910s into the 30s. Bilingual Swedes or Americans have of course been able to appreciate mix-language humor at any time, but as popular entertainment it died with World War II.

English-speaking Some Swedish performers capitalized on a Swedish ^{accent}. Arthur Donaldson of Chicago became ^{as} famous for his Swedish accent comic character Yon Yonsson as for his work in Gilbert and Sullivan and operetta. Another ^{such performer} was Charles Lindholm of Stillwater, Minnesota, ^{although} Only one of his plays drew on his Swedish background. This play, which made his fame and fortune, was the 1-act ^{play} The Man from Minnesota, peopled with comic types like "Charlie Lutefisk"--played by Lindholm himself--"Ima Lemon" and "Mr. and Mrs. Otto B. Holm."⁵⁰ Regulars on talk-shows in the upper Midwest often put on a "Skandehuvian" accent. The practise survives to this day on WCCO-AM, Minneapolis, where Roger Ericson of the popular "Boone & Ericson" show will slip into a Scandinavian accent "like a lutefisk into vater."

The final step in the development is the non-Swedish performer who puts on a Scandinavian stage accent and assumes a Scandinavian personality. An interesting example is the late comedian-singer Yogi Yorgeson, whose real name was Harry E. Stewart. (As it turns out, he actually was of Norwegian-Swedish descent with the family name Sharbo [probably Skarbo].)⁵¹

CONCLUSION

To its founders, the Swedish theatre^{in America} was an outlet for their talents, energy, creativity, and "Swedishness." It became a significant cultural institution of stabilizing influence, educating its members and perpetuating traditions. It satisfied the need to maintain ties with the home country, but at the same time helped make the adjustment to the life in the New Country. It gave pleasure and relief from boredom and drudgery. It promoted contacts with the American community--in the rental of theatres and other business transactions--though it was neither aimed at nor closely observed by the non-Swedish population. (This is not counting Norwegians and Danes, who sometimes joined forces with the Swedes.)⁵² Not surprisingly, it was negligible as a direct force for Americanization or as a vehicle for political ideas. Its importance lay in satisfying^{the} emotional and intellectual needs of its members and audiences, thus helping to ease their transition to a more "American" life.

Summing up, ~~the theatre of the Swedish Americans~~ did three things: First, it provided escape, whether into the romanticized past of the Old Country or into patent farce with a thin overlay of ethnic topicality. Second, it helped sustain and promote the Swedish language in the U.S., thereby strengthening the sense of identity so important to the first generation immigrant. Third, the plays with national-romantic or historical subject matter served as powerful reviews--albeit sentimentalized--of the history, folklore, and culture of Sweden.

OLLE I SKRATTHULT

Only one man--and around him a company of up to twenty performers--was able to make his living for an extended time as a Swedish language entertainer. This man was Hjalmar Peterson, better known as "Olle i Skratthult" (Olle from Laughtersville). He was born in Munkfors, Värmland, on February 7, 1886.⁵³ In 1906 he followed two older brothers to ^{Minnesota} A, where he quickly found that he had more inclination for entertaining than for bricklaying.⁵⁴ As a singer in Svenskamerikanska kvartetten (The Swedish-American Quartet) he toured Sweden 1909-11. During this tour he collected material he would later use for his performances in the United States, for example, songs and comic monologues in his native Värmland dialect.⁵⁵ He also took a suitable stage name in the Swedish bondkomik tradition, which prescribed a simple first name, like Olle or Johan, combined with a ludicrous place name, like Gråthult (Tearsville) or Knuten (The Corner). Upon returning to the United States, Hjalmar "Olle i Skratthult" Peterson embarked on a career as singer, actor, and comedian.⁵⁶ He had a long and varied life in the theatre, much of it on tour throughout the United States. He remained a performer until his death in Minneapolis, 1960.

In 1915, he discovered a young Swedish singer, who became his leading lady, in life as well as on stage. Her name was Olga Lindgren. Olga was born May 29, 1896, in Sunnäs, Hälsingland, and grew up in Norrsundet outside Gävle. In September of 1913 she left her home to join a brother and two uncles in Minneapolis, where she worked in their icecream-cone factory. Work in the factory was drudgery, so she was happy to be hired as a maid in a doctor's household. She stayed there for about a year. One Sunday Hjalmar Peterson heard her sing at a Good Templar meeting and asked her to come and sing with his group the following Sunday. She was discovered! Although gifted with a clear and strong voice, Olga had never really performed in Sweden--not counting one episode at the age of five when she stood on a railroad bridge and sang lustily while being showered with pennies--yet here she was, in

in the spring of 1916

"show business"! Hjalmar signed her up, and Hjalmar told her to take singing lessons.⁵⁷ Olga's family did not mind her career switch from maid to performer. The Olle i Skratthult troupe was respectable, based in Minneapolis, and her pay--if not her job security--better. On April 28, 1917, Olga and Hjalmar were married.

Olga was definitely an asset to the otherwise all-male group, and contributed to Olle's growing popularity.

. . . foremost of them all is the star of the group, Olle's wife (Mrs. Olga Lindgren-Peterson). She is fortunate enough to possess both a fetching appearance and excellent artistic talent as a singer and dancer.⁵⁸ No wonder that she charmed the audience and received thunderous applause.

To begin with, the company performed mostly in and around Minneapolis. By 1920, a performance in Chicago is recorded.⁵⁹ And from 1920 through 1931 the company made yearly tours throughout the United States.⁶⁰ The 1921-22 season saw an extended West Coast tour. Another West Coast tour came in 1924-25. All in all, the group came to the West Coast at least four times.⁶¹ The years 1925-31 were the busiest touring years, each season 1927-29 including at least three different play productions.

When Olga joined, the company numbered five members, a number expanded as needed. The West Coast tour 1924-25, for example, started with five members: Hjalmar and Olga, the barytone Annar Myhre, the violinist Arthur Martinson, and the accordeonist Thure Andersson. Somewhere in the middle of the tour, probably during the Christmas break, Olle signed up the pianist Harry Swanson, who toured with them for the remainder of the season and for seasons to come.⁶² Reviews from

later tours, possibly 1926-28, mention a company of nine.⁶³ Värmlänningarna, produced in 1928 and 1929, demanded a number of additional members. The play has seventeen named characters, not counting scores of peasants and dancers.⁶⁴ Olle i Skratthult Company's poster for this play includes portraits of seventeen performers.⁶⁵ To cut down the number of people actually traveling, Olle used doublecasting and local performers. The musicians in the group were pressed into

service as actors . Production photos from 1927 show the musicians Bert and Oscar Danielson acting , with false beard, whitened hair, etc.⁶⁶ (They were good actors, too, according to Olga.)⁶⁷ For the production of Värmlänningarna, Olle made use of local talent. Chicago actors filled out the cast in Chicago, and the local symphony played for the production in Boston and New York. In Salt Lake City, a group of local folk dancers added color to the performance.⁶⁸

Olle was the company's best-loved performer, its figure head, producer, and--with the exception of Värmlänningarna, which was directed by the Chicago actor Knut Sjöberg--also its artistic director.⁶⁹ Olle himself performed with his famous comic monologues and songs, and, with the exception of his appearance of Löpar-Nisse in Värmlänningarna, did not act in his company's plays. It is as producer and manager, rather than actor, that he has earned a place in the history of the Swedish-American theatre. Or perhaps one should say as a phenomenon, because Olle and his company were unique in Swedish America.

With the exception of Värmlänningarna, which was about three hours long, the plays performed by the Olle i Skratthult Company were always part of a longer program of mixed entertainment. The balance was made up of songs, recitations, comic monologues, folkdances, orchestra solos, and, after the program, the obligatory bal or public dance. The format is seen clearly in the following reviews:

On this trip the Company is playing: 'Sme Olas stora synd' (Ola Blacksmith's Big Sin), a three-act rural comedy which keeps the crowd roaring with laughter. Also a topnotch vaudeville program--Olle in new songs--His [sic] famous Sailor's Orchestra--novelty singing and dancing. Don't miss Olle this time, he always has a good show, but this is the best ever.⁷⁰

As usual, Olle i Skratthult played to a packed house Wednesday evening, at the New Fair House, Grantsburg [Wisconsin]. Olle is now accompanied by a caste [sic] of nine people, each unexcelled in his or her parts, who present a one act comedy, "Officers Three" [probably Tre förälskade poliskonstaplar]. This feature, with Olle's usual good program, forms a combination that is hard to beat.⁷¹

Plays selected for touring were light, mostly rural comedies like Käringa

mi's kusin (My old lady's cousin) and Lars Anders, Jan Anders och deras barn (Lars Anders, Jan Anders, and their children).⁷² The latter was performed on at least three different tours (1920, 1923, and 1927) and is one of the plays best remembered by Olga Lindgren-Nilsen. The biggest undertaking, and the biggest success, however, was Värmlänningarna. The poster shows seventeen performers; Olga claims there were twenty, not counting the musicians.⁷³ Olle himself played Låpar-Nisse, and Olga played Anna. The critics raved.

4,000 people saw the play, hundreds turned away, and never before has Värmlänningarna been given in this metropolis⁷⁴ with such wonderful interpretation as Olle i Skratthult's Co.

It was ideal, the way Värmlänningarna was presented last night in our city by Olle i Skratthult. It was attended by 2,000 people at the Arlington Theatre.⁷⁵

The performers in the Olle i Skratthult Company were contracted by the year or season, but were paid by the week or month. Olga recalls they were well paid--how well, she does not remember.⁷⁶ There was little opportunity for social life outside of the touring group. The tours would start in the fall, take a break at Christmas time, resume in January and continue into July. The summer months were spent in preparation for next season's tour. Home base was Minneapolis, the home town of most of the performers, and Olle's large cabin in Grand Marais at the North Shore of Lake Superior. The whole group spent the summer there, and the members have many happy memories of lazy days on the North Shore. Here Olga and Hjalmar returned for a short time to the normalcy of keeping house--one newspaper article jokingly implies that Olga's pickled herring and meatballs make Hjalmar put on too much weight every summer.⁷⁷ Other places around the country served as temporary bases of operation. Sometimes, the group was stationed in Chicago, one year in New York,⁷⁸ one year in Seattle, one in San Francisco, and five in Los Angeles. The choice of Los Angeles did not reflect on the number of Scandinavians in the area (though there were quite a few) as much as ^{on} ₁ the city's lovely winter climate--ideal for Christmas breaks--and the fact that Olle's oldest brother Albin was a chiropractor in Pasadena and had an

extra house which the company could use. Albin Peterson was a highly respected citizen, a member of the IOGT in Los Angeles, and recipient of the Swedish Vasa Order. Ties with respectability were never to be sneezed at!

In the twenties, the Olle i Skratthult Company visited Swedish and Scandinavian communities from coast to coast. The large cities, like New York, Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle, might sustain an extended stay, but the majority of the stops were in smaller places, good only for one-night stands. By train or caravan of two to four cars, the group would travel from Minneapolis to Chicago, Jamestown, New York, Buffalo, Worcester (Massachusetts), and back to Chicago, Moline, and Rock Island (Illinois); then on to Salt Lake City, Spokane, Seattle, Tacoma, Oakland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Pedro, reversing the route on the way back to Minneapolis. Thus the same place might be "hit" twice on the same tour, which necessitated program changes and improvements en route. The Christmas break in Los Angeles was an ideal time to freshen up the program before the trek back to Minnesota.

Arrangements for publicity, lodging, and rental of performance space were made by an "advance man," who traveled a couple of weeks ahead of the company. On tour, the group sometimes stayed in hotels, but often in private homes. June Holm of ~~Schaeffer~~ ^{Shafer}, Minnesota, remembers when the company stayed at the home of her parents.⁷⁹ (It is unclear whether the company paid for their lodgings there or not.) The group never lacked for invitations to coffee or dinner. Olga remembers one incident: the company had ^{just} performed in a small town in Minnesota, when they were caught in a storm. They knocked on the door of a farm to seek shelter. When the farmer saw the bedraggled group in the doorway, he exclaimed: "Well, if it isn't Olle i Skratthult! Come in, come in!" He and his family had just returned from attending Olle's performance in town.⁸⁰

The travel itself often took its toll. One performance in Galesburg, Illinois, had to be done without sets, because the car with the scenery was stuck in snow.

Another season, the company was involved in a train wreck, which took the life of one of its musicians. Olle, who did not trust banks, often carried large sums of money with him in a suitcase. Once the company was ambushed and narrowly escaped being robbed by Indians on their way to ~~Worley~~^{Hurley}, Wisconsin. Another time, the car caravan was halted by a mudslide in California. Olle, undaunted, abandoned the cars, climbed with his troupe across the mudslide, and walked with his suitcase into the next town, where he bought new cars.

Performances took place in all kinds of "theatres," from the plushiest opera houses with private dressing rooms to--once--a garage. The company carried its own scenery and properties, ordered from theatrical supply houses in Chicago and New York, but brought no lighting equipment. All places where Olle performed had footlights--or were supposed to. (The garage did not.) Between tours, sets and props were stored in the cabin on the North Shore. Individual performers were responsible for makeup and hairpieces. Theatrical makeup could be bought in Minneapolis, as there were enough theatrical societies in the area to support an outlet there. But the \$300 blonde, braided wig Olga bought for Anna in Värmlänningarna had to be ordered from New York.⁸¹ During a performance, everyone helped. Performers doubled as ticket takers, program sellers, ushers, stage hands, dressers, and light operators. Scenes were shifted by the men in the company.

Wherever the Olle i Skratthult Company went, it was welcomed, loved, and remembered. Newspaper clippings from small country towns as well as Chicago and New York attest to the extraordinary popularity of the company and, particularly, Olle himself. One apocryphal anecdote tells of a man in Lindström, Minnesota, who died the happiest death imaginable: he died laughing at Olle i Skratthult.⁸² Hjalmar Peterson's personality no doubt promoted his success. He was a mild-mannered, somewhat melancholy, and generous man. Although he had a great deal of money and did not stint on clothes or cars, he never lost his unassuming manner. He was not a profound man, nor a born speaker.⁸³ But as a bondkomiker he

was superb. Olle i Skratthult was a slow and shy type, with a blackened-out front tooth, straw colored wig, cap with flower, squeaky boots, coat, vest, and knickers, and a long scarf.⁸⁴ He specialized in Värmland dialect material, but did not have to say anything to have people laughing hysterically. His appeal was universal: he performed not just for Swedes, but also for Danes, Norwegians, Americans--even Ojibway indians, who attended his performances at the Minnesota State Fair and enjoyed him greatly.⁸⁵

Aside from his abilities as bondkomiker, Hjalmar Peterson had two other distinct gifts: that of recruiting able performers/tour members, and that of advertising. Recruiting was often deceptively informal: Olga was "discovered" singing at an IOGT meeting, "Miss Lilly" was signed on as cashier and folkdancer for a season to help her make money to go to art school, and one accordionist, Evan Sjögren, reportedly was recruited right off the field in Lindström!⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Olle's instinct for finding talented and compatible people must have been at work, since the performers got along well together.

It is perhaps surprising that a performer, whose stage character was a slow-witted, Swedish farmhand, should be so shrewd--one might even say American--in his advertising methods. Olle's advance publicity consisted of posters and press releases. In addition, he sold sheet music, song books, posters, programs, and play scripts.⁸⁷ Whenever he was in New York, he would record some of his latest song "hits"--on the Columbia, Victor, and Blue Bird labels--which were then sold across the country.⁸⁸

The company's posters did not differ appreciably from those used by other, non-professional, theatre groups. The early posters were printed entirely in Swedish, the later ones used more and more English text. One poster from 1929 was printed entirely in English, announcing "the absorbing melodrama of ambition, Värmlänningarna."⁸⁹ The principle at work--found to this day in the Swedish-American press--is to give all essential information (date, time, fee) in English,

title and description, assuring bona fide ethnic material, in Swedish. Olle's use of press releases was, however, definitely professional. He would cull favorable comments from recent reviews, print them up, and send them to all the newspapers in the towns next in line for the tour. The two excerpts from reviews of Värmlänningarna quoted above were reprinted on the poster for the 1929 tour. Excerpts from a review printed in Worcester, Massachusetts, in the spring of 1924, are found in a review in Svenska Pressen, Spokane, Washington, the following fall.⁹⁰ Two papers reporting on the same performance use suspiciously similar phrasing.⁹¹ It is sometimes difficult to tell whether the reviewer is expressing any opinion of his own, indeed, whether he has even seen the particular performance he is writing about. Just as posters were shifting to English text, press releases were prepared in both English and Swedish to reach the greatest number of people. And Olle did get a good deal of attention in the English-language press.⁹²

Only once during her years with the Olle i Skratthult Company did Olga return to Sweden. Her three-month visit in 1927 brought a double heartache: upon docking in Göteborg, she was told that her mother had just died, and when she returned to the United States, her husband had found a new romantic interest. Olle himself never went back after 1911, but in his late years he confessed that he would have liked to "go home."⁹³

Värmlänningarna was the most impressive of the Olle i Skratthult Company's productions, and it was also one of the last. Although at least one play was produced thereafter (Kåringa mi's kusin, 1931), times were changing. Hjalmar lost his cabin on the North Shore through speculation. He and Olga parted ways --they were divorced in 1933--and Olle remarried. A general decline in Swedish theatre was a fact, due in part to the Depression, in part to the advance of the movies, but mostly due to the decline of the Swedish language.⁹⁴ Perhaps Olle could have extended the touring days of his company if he had compromised more

on the language. But no matter what language he used in his publicity, Olle i Skratthult always performed in Swedish. The entire show was in Swedish. The Swedish language was central to his stage personality and to his company. When the language faded in the thirties, he simply responded by using less and less spoken material.

Looking at production photos of the Olle i Skratthult Company, it is tempting to conclude that the performances were amateurish. The poses look stilted, the makeup obvious, and the sets home made. An example of the unsophisticated scenery is the backdrop seen in several production photos from 1927. The drop shows a cabin wall with a window and shelf with tankards, plates, and candlestick. Under the shelf is a horizontal wall hanging. All these elements are painted on the drop. Onto this painted drop is tacked a set of curtains around the window and a real wall hanging, under the painted one. The corners of the painted window, where the curtains are pinned on, pucker and pull. The combination of real and painted wall hanging serves only to point up the two-dimensionality of the painted one. This decorative scheme was used for at least two different productions, possibly more, with different curtains and wall hangings--and of course different arrangement of furniture.⁹⁵ Yet who could criticize a touring company for having painted all-purpose drops rather than three-dimensional, specific sets? The stilted poses may simply reflect the fact that the photographs were posed. This is particularly clear in the production photo of Lars Anders, Jan Anders och deras barn, which shows every single company member, including the tuxedo dressed musicians and Olle himself, neither of whom were in the play. Nor do the reviews reveal much about the level of the acting or the professionalism of the productions, and what little is said may have been influenced by Olle's press releases. What is undisputable is that the Olle i Skratthult Company was organized enough, and talented enough, to make a good living for two decades by touring the United States. Their performances satisfied

the need for social interaction and identity reinforcement among the Swedish Americans. The Swedish language was important, yet not essential, for an appreciation of their programs. There may not have been much subtlety, but there was energy, warmth, dedication. There was love for the material performed. There was expertise in handling crowds, coping with emergencies, and projecting into the corners of lofts and halls. There was stage presence and there was savvy.

Erland Richter

The reviewer, who obviously was touched by Olle's performance, writes about the effect of Olle and his company on their Swedish audiences in words that could equally sum up all of Swedish theatre in America:

What I above all wish to say about Olle i Skratthult is that the performances by himself and his company strengthen the ties between the Swedes out here and the Swedish soil. The millions of smiles and perhaps ten thousand tears evoked by him were all born under the sign of Swedishness.

Some work for Swedishness with seriousness and the singing of hymns, others with play and popular songs. May the one not look asance at the other. We all have our appointed task to do. Let us do it, mind our own business, and things will ge well for us all. Olle has done his task, or rather, is in the process of doing it. When his measure is filled, he will take his rest. We must not begrudge Olle and Olga their rest, when the time is ripe. Until then, cheer us, Olle, for there are too many who dampen our spirits!96

1. Henriette C.K. Naeseth, The Swedish Theatre of Chicago 1868-1950 (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Historical Society, 1951).
2. Ibid., p.vii.
3. Theodore C. Blegen, Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition (Northfield, Minnesota: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1940), p.560.
4. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, p.viii.
5. The Danish theatre in Seattle has been researched by Clint Hyde, but the history of the Swedish theatre in that area remains unwritten. Several doctoral dissertations deal with theatre in Minneapolis and St. Paul, but discuss only professional legitimate theatre. Two other dissertations may be of tangential interest: Charles L. Geroux, "The History of Theaters and Related Activity in Dubuque, Iowa, 1837-1877" (Ph.D.diss., Wayne State University, 1973) and Bruce Martin Wasserman, "Early Theatre in Spokane, Washington, 1889-1902" (Ph.D.diss., University of Washington, 1975).
6. Uno Myggan Ericson, "Snusgatans festival," Från scen och cabaret (Stockholm: Stegeland, 1978), pp.104-119; Maury Bernstein, "The Man Who Gave Us Nikolina," Minnesota Earth Journal 2, no. 6 (1974):18-21; and Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, passim. Also several articles by Ulf Beijbom (see Bibliography).
7. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, p.viii; Nils Hasselmo, Swedish America (New York: Swedish Information Service, 1976), p.35; Ernst Skarstedt, Svensk-Amerikanska folket i helg och söcken (Stockholm: Björck & Björjesson, 1917), p.147.
8. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, pp.27 and 40; also Naeseth, "Drama in Swedish in Chicago 1868-1913," Illinois State Historical Journal 41 (June, 1948):160. In her article, Naeseth lists Svea Hall as the place of performance, in her subsequently published book German Hall.
9. Alfred Söderström, Minneapolis minnen (Minneapolis, [1899]), p.262; Blegen, Norwegian Migration, p.562. The Scandinavian Society and its offshoot the Scandinavian Dramatic Society (founded 1870) produced mostly plays in Norwegian.

10. Ernst H. Behmer, "Seventy Years of the Swedish Theatre in America," The Swedish Element in America, ed. Eric G. Westman, 4 vols. (Chicago: Swedish American Biographical Society, 1931-34), 4:111-120.

11. Hazel Magnusson, Interview, July 10, 1976. Aside from the Magnussons, the group included the accordionist Thure Andersson, June Holm, and Vernon and Mildred Peterson (now living in Red Wing, Minnesota). Denny and Hazel Magnusson are better known as the founders of "Yesterfarm of Memories" museum in Center City, Minnesota.

12. Colonel John Franzén, Salvation Army, Interview, March 6, 1973.

13. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, p.273.

14. August Strindberg, "En nationell bildningsanstalt," Det nya riket in Samlade skrifter (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1912-21), 10:132. All translations from the original Swedish in this article are by Anne-Charlotte Harvey.

15. Ibid., pp.137-38.

16. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, ch.6, esp. pp.225 and 229. Clubs dedicated to the performance of the plays by August Strindberg (1849-1912) were "Strindbergarna" in Chicago and a group by the same name in Minneapolis (actually Svenska Dramatiska Klubben renaming itself for the performance of The Father on Jan.23, 1916). It appears that the first Strindberg play performed in the United States was Lucky-Pehr (Chicago, 1899), followed by, particularly, Gustav Vasa (Chicago, 1911), Easter (Chicago, 1913 and 1918, Minneapolis, 1915 or 1916), Pariah (Chicago, 1914 and 1922), ^{The} Pelican (Chicago, 1915), The Father (Minneapolis, 1916), ^{The People} of Hemsö (Chicago, 1937) (Ibid., pp.266-84; MSRC).

17. Uno Myggan Ericson, På nöjets estrader (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1971) and Från scen och cabaret, discuss the significance of bondkomik.

18. The spelling varies. The original spelling is Värmländingarne, followed--due to spelling reforms--by Värmländingarne, Värmländingarna, and, today, Värmlänningarna.

19. Naeseth, "Drama in Swedish," p.163; Swedish Theatre, p.284.

20. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, p.54.

21. In 1913, the Eastern Co. from New York took Värmlänningarna to Chicago, in 1920 Ernst Behmer of Chicago took it to nearby Illinois towns, and in 1928 and 1929, the Minneapolis-based Olle i Skratthult Company took it to Chicago and the East Coast (Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, pp.203, 213, and 271).

22. Värmlänningarna was so popular that it even spawned imitations on both sides of the Atlantic: Nerkingarne (The people of Närke), a 3-act folk drama with song, written in Stockholm in 1872 and first performed in Chicago in 1888 (Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, p.280), and Småläänningarna (The people of Småland), written by Otto E. Anderson in Minneapolis, 1919 (privately printed).

23. Naeseth, "Drama in Swedish," p.164.

24. "The People of Värmland," by Paul W. Petterson of St. Louis Park, Minnesota.

25. Some of the few plays adapted and translated from the English belong in this group: Ijuven, a translation and adaptation of The Thief by Upton Sinclair, performed 1923, 1930, and 1935, and Sällskapsqlaset, a translation of The Social Glass by Trask Woodward, performed 1894 and 1913 (Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, p.283).

26. Unless otherwise indicated, play publication and performance data are from Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, pp.266-284.

27. Possibly by Magnus Elmlad, celebrated journalist and author of the well-known emigrant ballad about Petter Jönsson.

28. "Snoose Boulevard" was the nickname for main streets in many Swede towns, so called because because Scandinavians were known to use "snoose" (snuff), the cheapest form of tobacco. "Snoose Boulevards" were Cedar Avenue in Minneapolis, Payne Avenue in St. Paul, and Chicago Avenue in Chicago. The play title refers to Chicago Avenue, Chicago.

29. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, p.viii.

30. These names are partly derived from Naeseth, partly from playbills, posters, and programs from the collections of ^{the actresses} Maria Sonander-Rice and Olga Lindgren-Nilsen, both of Minneapolis. These collections are here referred to as MSRC and OLNC.

31. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, p. 55.

32. Ibid., pp.182-83.

33. Ibid., pp.86 and 95.

34. Svenska nyheter (Chicago), April 10, 1906.
35. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, pp.66-67.
36. Ibid., pp.133 and 217; Naeseth, "Drama in Swedish," p.169.
37. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, p.19.
38. Hamlet and Taming of the Shrew (Sw. Så tuktas en argbigga) used the Swedish translations by C.A.Hagberg (1853 and 1960, respectively). H.M.S.Pinafore was translated for the 1896 Chicago production by the Swedish-American journalist Gustaf Wicklund.
39. Naeseth, "Drama in Swedish," p.163.
40. Ibid., p.169.
41. Olga Lindgren-Nilsen, Interview, June 18, 1979. (Olga Lindgren-Nilsen will hereafter be cited as OLN.) Erland Richter, "Olle och Olga: Några små funderingar rundt Olle i Skratthult och hans sällskap," Svea (Worcester, Mass., spring 1924).
42. In this case the expurgation is directly traceable to Olle i Skratthult, who first recorded and published this song in the United States (Olle i Skratthult songbooks, OLNC, and recording, Victor 79278 - A). Olga Lindgren-Nilsen says that she never heard the verse about the illegitimate child (Interview, March 6, 1973).
43. Andersson, Petterson och Lundström (1866) by Frans Hodell from Der böse Geist Lumpaci Vagabundus by Johannes Nestroy; En natt i Fålkensberg (1851) by Jonas Philipsson from En nat i Roeskilde, an adaptation by Hans Christian Andersen of Une chambre a deux lits by Charles Varin and Louis Lefèvre; Tre förälskade poliskonstaplar (1870) by Johan Jolin from Trois amours de pompiers by Moreau, Paul S. de Sancy, and Alfred C. Lartigue; Öregrund-Östhammar (1902) by Herman Kinmansson and adapted by Algot E. Strand from Kyritz-Pyritz by H. Wilken.
44. Hasselmo, Swedish America, p.38.

45. Ibid., p p. 36-40.

46. Albert Nordeen, Interview, June 18, 1979.

47. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, p.54.

48. Victor 69565-A; Victor 72719-B. "Olle ve' Kvarna" was a bondkomik type.

49. Poster, MSRC.

50. Carla Wulfsberg, Letter, January 12, 1980, and interview with Charles Lindholm's niece, Vivien Mackey of Seattle, January 19, 1980.

51. Obituary, Minneapolis Star, May 21, 1956.

52. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, p.86.

53. Information about Hjalmar Peterson has been obtained primarily from interviews with his family and co-workers and collections belonging to the two children of his second marriage, Karl Peterson and Sheri Hansing of Minneapolis, and his first wife, Olga Lindgren-Nilsen, now living in St. Paul. The life and work of Olle i Skratthult has recently been given some attention by a non-profit group in Minneapolis, the Olle i Skratthult Project (founded 1971). The material collected by the Project has resulted in a commemorative exhibit at the Emigrant Institute, Vaxjö, Sweden, the (now defunct) Snoose Boulevard Festival in Minneapolis, and the publication of six records. As remarked above ^(note 6), very little has been published about Olle i Skratthult.

54. Eventually, Hjalmar had three brothers in the United States: Albin, a chiropractor in California, David, a photographer in Princeton, Minnesota, and the youngest, Paul, a restaurant owner in Lancaster, Minnesota (OLN, 3/6 1973).

55. He also fathered an illegitimate son, Fritz Jönsson, who is now a painter in Kistinge, Halmstad. The two kept in touch over the years, but never met. Once, in 1927, Fritz almost came over to America, but at the last minute, "something came up" (Hallandsposten, December 23, 1974). A collection of letters from father to son document the shifting fortunes of Hjalmar Peterson's career and offer special insight into the last lonely years of his life (Emigrant Institute, Vaxjö, Sweden).

56. As a performer, Hjalmar Peterson used both his own name and his bondkomiker name Olle i Skratthult. When he sang serious songs or art songs he was Hjalmar Peterson, just as he was Hjalmar Peterson when he sang with the Salvation Army during his last years. But it was as Olle that he was known and loved. Reviews and contemporaries refer to him as Olle; indeed, his former wife Olga talks of him alternately as "Hjalmar" and "Olle." Similar confusion exists in the usage of "Olle i Skratthult": at times, it means Hjalmar Peterson's comic stage personality, at times Hjalmar Peterson himself, and at times the company, for which he was manager.

57. Information about Olga Lindgren-Nilsen from OLNC and interviews over a period of years from 1973 to 1980.--Olga did take singing lessons at Mc Phail School of Music and her teacher was Madame Starbäck-Hall (Interview, March 6, 1973).

58. Unidentified Swedish-language newspaper, Tacoma, Washington, February, 1925 (OLNC), probably Svenska Pacific Tribunen.

59. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, p.268.

60. Olga Lindgren-Nilsen remembers no plays touring after 1925 with the exception of Värmlänningarna. On this point she is clearly contradicted by other evidence. In fact, the years 1925-31 were the busiest touring years, each season 1927-29 featuring at least three different play productions (playbills, OLNC and MSRC; interviews; Naeseth).

61. Unidentified English-language newspaper, Everett, Washington, probably 1928. (OLNC)
A
The dates of the two other tours have not been identified with certainty.

62. Data about the 1924-25 tour have been put together from reviews, which (For part of this season Olle also recruited his sister-in-law, Mrs. Lindell of) for this season are especially plentiful (OLNC). Los Angeles.

63. Dawson Sentinel (Minnesota), September 29, 1927, makes reference to a performance in New York on March 20, 1927, with nine company members.

64. At least one production of Värmlänningarna in Swedish America assumed gigantic proportions. It was performed in the Metropolitan Opera House, the largest

and plushiest auditorium in Minneapolis, on April 13, 1919, and was advertised as having "around a hundred participants" (MSRC).

65. Poster, OLNC. It was printed in Chicago, probably for the 1929 tour, as it incorporates press clips from previous performances on the East Coast.

66. OLNC. The photos dated 1927 and signed were taken by Hjalmar's brother David Peterson, Princeton, Minnesota.

67. OLN, Interview, February 9, 1973.

68. OLN, Interview, June 18, 1979.

69. Naeseth, Swedish Theatre, p.223.

70. Dawson Sentinel (Minnesota), April 26, 1928.

71. Unidentified English-language newspaper, Grantsburg, Wisconsin, poss. fall 1925, OLNC.

72. By Alfred Ebenhard (1929) and Gustaf af Geijerstam (1894), respectively.

A list of the plays known to have been presented by the Olle i Skratthult Company is appended.

73. OLN, Interview, February 9, 1973.

74. Nordstjärnan (New York), prob. 1928, reprinted on Värmlänningarna poster (OLNC).

75. Svea (erroneously given as Boston, actually Worcester, Mass.), prob. 1928, reprinted on Värmlänningarna poster (OLNC).

76. OLN, Interview, June 18, 1979.

77. Erland Richter, "Olle och Olga."

78. The company stayed in an apartment in New York for ~~several months~~ ^{almost a year} without making appearances in the surrounding area. They were preparing for the New York premiere of Värmlänningarna ^(which opened in Boston, with accompaniment by the Boston Symphony), probably the same highly acclaimed production that was performed in Chicago on Dec.15-16, 1928 (OLN, Interview, June 18, 1979).

79. Albert Nordeen, Interview, June 18, 1979.

80. OLN, Interview, June 18, 1979.

81. OLN, Interview, May, 1973. The wig is still in good condition (OLNC).

82. Ulf Beijbom, "Olle i Skratthult--emigranternas bondkomiker!" Svenska

Amerikanaren Tribunen (Chicago), May 2, 1973.

83. Colonel John Franzén, Salvation Army, Interview, March 6, 1973. When Hjalmar Peterson in his later years toured the East Coast for the Salvation Army singing religious songs, he was reluctant to tour alone, and felt better when Col. Franzén could come along to handle the speaking. This Hjalmar Peterson was an older, unwell man singing a limited repertoire of religious songs. As Olle i Skratthult, he had had no hesitation and a vast repertoire.

84. OLN, Interview, February 9, 1973, and role photos (OLNC).

85. OLN, Interview, March 6, 1973. One performance by the Olle i Skratthult Company in the Los Angeles area is reviewed in an unidentified Danish-language newspaper, January, 1925 (OLNC).

86. Richter, ^{"Olle och Olga"} _^; OLN, Interview, June 18, 1979. Evan Sjögren ^(Lindström, MN.) still lives in.

87. Swedish publishing houses in Chicago supplied Swedish plays and popular songs, printed in the United States. One house, Dalkullan, published an annual songbook and served as a clearing house for other Swedish articles, for example, folk costumes. Another firm, Anders Löfström, published Swedish poetry, humor, and play scripts. Olle would pick up new material from Sweden in Chicago, then reprint it privately and sell it in connection with his ^{own} _^ performances. He printed at least five different song books and at least one play script. On the basis of the success of the previous tour in 1920, Olle printed up the script for Lars Anders, Jan Anders och deras barn to be sold on the 1923 tour (Preface, Lars Anders [Minneapolis: privately printed, 1923]). Copyrights were apparently not carefully observed. One interesting footnote is that Olle, possibly to avoid copyright problems, changed the title of one of his most popular songs, from the original Svinnsta skär to Lyckoskär.

88. Olle i Skratthult Project Collection.

89. OLNC.

90. The closing remarks by Erland Richter in his article "Olle and Olga"

(Svea, spring 1924), were reprinted verbatim in Svenska Pressen (Spokane), November 12, 1924.

91. "Olle i Skratthult Draws Big Crowd," unidentified English-language newspaper, Jamestown, New York, poss. 1927; "Swedish Comedian Here," a second (OLNC) unidentified English-language newspaper, Jamestown, New York, same date. The reviews describe the same performance. The phrasing is identical in the descriptions of the content of the program, the costumes worn, and intended continued travel route. (The two papers are probably the Jamestown Post and Evening Journal.)

92. One review mentions the play Officers Three, probably Tre förälskade poliskonstaplar (Three police constables in love). The play was performed in Swedish. There is no indication that the journalist was bi-lingual and himself translated the play title. The translation was probably provided in the company press release. That Olle used English press releases is clear from, for example, the similarities in the Jamestown reviews (see note 91). About half of the clippings in OLNC are in Swedish, the other half in English.

93. John Franzen, Interview, March 6, 1973; letter to Fritz Jönsson, Aug. 22 and Nov. 10, 1958.

94. Though the competition of the movies was keenly felt--one Värmlänningarna poster (Svenska Dramatiska Sällskapet, Minneapolis, September 5-6, 1925) proclaims "not a Moving Picture, but the Real Play!" (MRSC)--it was definitely the decline in the language that hurt Olle's business most (OLN, Interview, June 18, 1979).

95. All production photos of the Olle i Skratthult Company in OLNC.

96. Richter, "Olle och Olga" (see notes 41 and 90).

ANNOTATED LIST OF WORKS CITED

I. COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

< — Among the many collections of Swedish-American material, the following include material pertaining to Swedish-American theatre:

American Swedish Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Augustana College Library, Rock Island, Illinois

Emigrant Institute, Vaxjö, Sweden*

Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota

Nordic Heritage Museum, Seattle, Washington (collection being assembled)

Nordic Collections, Honnold Library, Claremont, California

University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota

University of Washington, Seattle, Washington

*Olle i Skratthult Project Collection, now deposited with the Emigrant Institute.

~~II. PUBLISHED SOURCES~~~~A. Newspapers~~

~~An exhaustive list of daily and weekly newspapers, monthlies, and irregularly published journals, pertaining to the Swedish theatre in America is impossible to give.~~

II. PUBLISHED SOURCES

A. Newspapers

It is outside the scope of this Bibliography to list all daily and weekly newspapers of proven or potential value for documenting the Swedish theatre in America. A thorough search would involve all available files of all papers in the target area for the time concerned, primarily the Swedish-language publications, but also the English-language papers to note the extent of attention they gave the Swedish theatre. (For the Chicago area, see Naeseth,

Swedish Theatre, pp.345-47.) Obvious newspapers to scrutinize include Nordstjernan, Svea, and Nordstjernan-Svea on the East Coast, Svenska-Amerikanaren Tribunen and others (see Naeseth) for the Upper Midwest, and Vestkusten, Svenska Pressen and Svenska Pacific Tribunen on the West Coast.

B. Books and periodicals

Ander, Fritiof O. The Cultural Heritage of the Swedish Immigrant: Selected References. Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Library Publications, no.27, 1956.

Bibliography.

Anderson, Otto E. Smålandingarne. Minneapolis: n.p., 1919.

Four-act comedy about the "People of Småland" in Sweden and America.

Behmer, Ernst H. "Seventy Years of the Swedish Theatre in America." In The Swedish Element in America, edited by Eric G. Westman, vol.4, pp.111-120. Chicago: Swedish American **Biographical Society**, 1934.

General account of the Swedish theatre in the United States by one of the leaders of Chicago theatre (active 1893-1946). Valuable.

Beijbom, Ulf. Swedes in Chicago. A Demographic and Social Study of the 1846-1880 Immigration. Studia Historica Upsaliensia, no.38. Stockholm: Scandinavian University Books, 1971.

Most important recent treatment of Swedish-American settlement history. Scholarly and thorough background. Little direct mention of theatre.

Beijbom, Ulf. Amerika! Amerika! En bok om utvandringen. Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1977.

Popular treatment of the emigration. Excellent background.

----- "Olle i Skratthult--emigranternas bondkomiker!" Svenska Amerikanaren Tribunen,^(Chicago)
2 May, 1973.

----- "Olle i Skratthult--Nikolina och nöjeslivet i svensk-amerika." Svenska Posten
(Seattle and Portland), 23 January, 1974.

These two articles are in essence the same: a popular resume of findings to date about Olle i Skratthult and his company. Some factual errors.

Bernstein, Maury. "The Man Who Gave Us Nikolina." Minnesota Earth Journal 2, no.6
(1972):18-21.

Brief summary of Olle i Skratthult's life and career. Some factual errors.

----- "Olle i Skratthult and Scandinavian-American Vaudeville." In American Popular Music by Johannes Riedel. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1976.

Thorough treatment of Olle i Skratthult's life, career, and ethnicity. Used as study material for course in American Popular Music.

Blegen, Theodore C. Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition. Northfield, Minn.: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1940.

information

General about the role of cultural societies among Scandinavian immigrants.

Ericson, Uno Myggan. På nöjets estrader. Stockholm: Bonniers, 1971.

Fundamental work about Swedish bondkomik.

----. Från scen och cabaret. Stockholm: Stegelands, 1978.

Expanded treatment of bondkomik, including a chapter about Olle i Skratthult and the Snoose Boulevard Festival ("Snusgatans festival," pp.104-119).

Haml, Patricia. "Travels on the Boat of Longing: The Snoose Boulevard Festival." In American Popular Music by Johannes Riedel. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1976.

Study of the background and community reactions to the Snoose Boulevard Festival. Used as study material for course in American Popular Music.

Hasselmo, Nils. Swedish America. New York: Swedish Information Service, 1976.

Excellent overview. Annotated bibliography. Treatment of theatre pp.35-36 and pp.62-63. Some factual errors. Excellent treatment of the language question (pp.36-44).

Lindblom, Ernst. Svenska teaterminnen från Chicago. Stockholm: C.I. Gullbergs förlag, 1916.

Memoirs of an actor in the Swedish Chicago theatre in the 1890s. Valuable, although somewhat unreliable, written after return to Sweden.

Ljungmark, Lars. Swedish Exodus. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979.

Translation of a standard popular work on the Swedish emigration. Good background. Bibliography of value.

Lundberg, Holger. "Stage and Radio Performers." Swedes in America 1638-1938, edited by Adolph B. Benson and Naboth Hedin, pp.482-487. New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1969.

Brief treatment of Swedish-Americans who became professional English-language entertainers. Of limited value.

Naeseth, Henriette C. Koren. "Drama in Swedish in Chicago 1868-1913." Illinois State Historical Journal 41 (June 1948):159-170.

Preparatory study for the larger work Swedish Theatre of Chicago 1868-1950. Excellent survey. Some factual errors, corrected in the later treatment.

----. The Swedish Theatre of Chicago 1868-1950. Rock Island, Ill.: Augustana Historical Society, 1951.

The major study of Swedish theatre in the United States. Thorough and readable. A few errors, particularly in the spelling and translation of Swedish words. Appendices, extensive notes and bibliography. Valuable.

Napier, Wilt, and Naeseth, Henriette C. K. "Two Early Norwegian Dramatic Societies in Chicago," Norwegian-American Studies and Records 10 (1938):44-75.

Of interest for the study of Scandinavian theatre in Chicago. In a number of places, the first dramatic societies were pan-Scandinavian and Norwegian the preferred language.

Nordström, Byron, ed. The Swedes in Minnesota. Minneapolis: T.S. Denison, 1976.

Chapters on Swedish organizational life and language in Minnesota offer good background to the study of the Minnesota theatre.

Olson, Ernst W.; Schön, Anders; and Engberg, Martin J., eds. History of the Swedes in Illinois. 2 vols. Chicago, 1908. Reprint. New York: Arno Press, 1979.

A classic source. Vol.1 covers, among other things, institutions, music, art, and artists. Vol.2 consists of biographical sketches of prominent Swedes in Illinois. Interesting background.

Personne, Nils. Svenska teatern. 8 vols. Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1913-27.

Encyclopedic work about theatre in Sweden in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Sketches of actors who emigrated or toured Swedish America.

Peterson, Hjalmar. Preface to Lars Anders, Jan Anders och deras barn, by Gustaf af Willmar, Minn.: Hjalmar Peterson Geijerstam. ~~Minneapolis: n.p.~~, 1923.

Olle i Skratthult's justification for privately printing this play script.

Richter, Erland. "Olle och Olga: Några små funderingar rundt Olle i Skratthult och hans sällskap." Svea (Worcester, Mass.), spring 1924.

Lengthy and somewhat gushy review of Olle i Skratthult's Company contribution to the preservation of Swedishness through theatre, song, and music.

Skarstedt, Ernst. Svensk-amerikanska folket i helg och söcken. Stockholm: Björck & Björjesson, 1917.

Fundamental source including many valuable glimpses of Swedish theatre and biographical sketches of cultural leaders. Readable, though lacking in organization.

----. Våra pennfaktare: Lefnads- och karaktärsteckningar öfver svensk-amerikanska tidningsmän, skalder och författare. San Francisco: Ernst Skarstedt, 1897.

Major source of information about Swedish-American journalists and authors.

Sonander-Rice, Maria. "Some Sketches From My 85 Year Life." Printed in Svenska Amerikanaren Tribunen, 3 May, 1972, in Swedish. Later translated by author.

Brief and personal reminiscences by one of Minneapolis' foremost Swedish actresses in the 1910s and 20s. Valuable, though erratic.

Strindberg, August. "En nationell bildningsanstalt." Det nya riket, vol.10 of Samlade skrifter, pp.130-146. Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1912-21.

Satiric description of theatre in Stockholm in the 1870s.

Sundbeck, Carl. Svenskarna i Amerika. Stockholm: F.C. Askerbergs Bokförlag, 1900.

Includes a brief paragraph about Swedish theatre in the United States.

Söderström, Alfred. Blixtar på Tidnings-Horisonten, samlade och Magasinerade af
Alfred Söderström. Warroad, Minn.: n.p., 1910.

in the United States
 The Swedish language press [^] and its mighty pens are portrayed here.
 Interesting background.

----. Minneapolis minnen. Minneapolis: n.p., [1899].

Anecdotal history of Minneapolis, lively and full of curiosities. Deals with
 early theatre in Minneapolis (pp.267-276), Quite thorough.

C. Radio and Television programs

Olle i Skratthult. Documentary by Swedish Television. Dir. Stig Tornehed. 1974.

Snoose Boulevard Festival. Documentary by Swedish Television. Dir. Stig Tornehed. 1974.

Producer Stig Tornehed.

Primadonna hos Olle i Skratthult. Program by Swedish Radio. 2 March, 1975.
[^]

Olle tog Nikolina. Documentary by Steve Benson and Anne-Charlotte Harvey for KUOM-FM,
 Minneapolis. 1975.

III. UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

A. Collections (clippings, photos, posters, programs, memorabilia)

Johnson, Ted. Violin player with Olle i Skratthult Company. Recordings, record
 catalogs, clippings, photos.

Lindgren-Nilsen, Olga. Hjalmar Peterson's first wife and leading lady of the Olle i
 Skratthult Company 1916-33. Extensive collection of clippings, photos, scripts,
 posters, and memorabilia from the Olle i Skratthult Company.

Peterson, Karl. Hjalmar Peterson's son (second marriage). Photos, memorabilia from Hjalmar Peterson's life. Minneapolis.

Sonander-Rice, Maria. Actress in Swedish Minneapolis theatre in the 1910s and 20s.

Clippings, photos, posters, programs, and memorabilia. ^{Minneapolis} Copies deposited by Olle i Skratthult Project with the Emigrant Institute, Sweden, and with Mr. and Mrs. Anne-Charlotte Harvey, San Diego. Courtesy of ^{Mr. and Mrs.} Arnold Walker, Minneapolis.

B. General

Olle i Skratthult Exhibit Program. Emigrant Institute, Växjö, Sweden, 1974.

Peterson, Hjalmar. Letters to his son Fritz Jönsson and family in Sweden, 1958.

Emigrant Institute, Växjö, Sweden.

Wulfsberg, Carla. Letter to Anne-Charlotte Harvey. 12 January, 1980.

C. Interviews (taped; all, except as noted, done in Minneapolis or St. Paul)

Director of the Emigrant Institute, Sweden.

Beijbom, Ulf. ^ATelephone interview by Anne-Charlotte Harvey. 10 May, 1979.

Anderson, Phil; Carlson, Ted; Filström, Sid; and Haselius, Wally. Members of Olle i

Skratthult Orchestra. By Rosemary Dahlen. 4 February, 1973.

Carlson, Ted. By Steve Benson. 29 April, 1972.

Franzen, John, Col. By Carl-Werner Petterson. 6 March, 1973.

Hansing, Sheri. Hjalmar Peterson's daughter (second marriage). By Steve Benson.

29 April, 1972.

Johnson, Ted. Member of Olle i Skratthult Orchestra. By Carl-Werner Petterson.

5 March, 1973.

Lindgren-Nilsen, Olga. Telephone interview by Maury Bernstein. 4 February, 1973.

----. By Steve Benson. 9 February, 1973.

----. By Carl-Werner Petterson. 6 March, 1973.

----. By Anne-Charlotte Harvey and Stig Tornehed. May, 1973.

----. By Anne-Charlotte Harvey. 18 June, 1979.

Seattle, Washington.
Mackey, Vivien. Charles Lindholm's niece. Telephone interview by Anne-Charlotte
Harvey. 19 January, 1980.

Magnusson, Hazel. Proprietor of "Yesterfarm of Memories" Museum, widow of Denny
Magnusson. Center City, Minnesota. By Anne-Charlotte Harvey. 10 July, 1976.

Nordeen, Albert. Brother of Hazel Magnusson. By Anne-Charlotte Harvey. 18 June, 1979.

PROFESSIONAL SWEDISH LANGUAGE THEATRE COMPANIES IN THE UNITED STATES

(There was, as far as I can ascertain, only one professional company performing in Swedish. This was the Olle i Skratthult Company, based in Minneapolis, but touring all over the United States. The years when the company was active are difficult to give, because ^{Hjalmar Peterson} ~~Olle i Skratthult~~ started as a solo performer with one accompanist in 1911. By 1916 he had a touring group, working in Minnesota. Gradually the company grew in size and extended its tours to reach from coast to coast. The height of the touring days was the mid-1920s. By 1933, the company lost its leading lady and ^{had} ~~ceased~~ to tour plays, gradually moving more and more towards playing dance music. The tours and the group shrunk, until it again consisted of Olle alone. During his last years, he toured as Hjalmar Peterson for the Salvation Army on the East Coast. Audiences were interested in seeing their old favorite Olle i Skratthult turned religious.

Defining extensive touring to have taken place during those years when the group performed in Chicago, the inclusive dates are 1920-1931.

One other company is of tangential interest. This was the Charles Lindholm Company, led by Charles Lindholm of Minnesota and touring the United States from 1908 to 1924 or -25. The company was professional, and like ^{the} ~~the~~ Olle i Skratthult Company, it made its living touring with a vaudeville-type program, composed of, among other things, plays. There the similarity ends. For whereas Olle performed Swedish plays in Swedish, Charles Lindholm performed ^{mostly} ~~American~~ material ~~and~~, always in the English language. The one "ethnic" exception was Charles Lindholm's own "The Man from Minnesota," featuring himself as "Charlie Lutefisk." He was equally well known for touring Peg o' My Heart on the Orpheum circuit. Born in 1874, in White Rock, Minnesota, he died 1936 in Minneapolis.

TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF PLAYS PERFORMED BY OLLE I SKRATTHULT COMPANY

1919-20:

March 6, 13*	<u>Piperman i knipan</u> (Piperman in a Fix) or <u>En brottslig betjänt</u> (A Criminal Valet)** (1-act comedy [1869] by Richard Gustafson, from <u>Les forfaits de Pipermans</u> by Alfred Duru and Henri Chivot)	Chicago
March 6, 16	<u>Lars Anders, Jan Anders och deras barn</u> (Lars Anders, Jan Anders, and their Children) (3-act folk comedy [1894] by Gustaf af Geijerstam)	Chicago

1920-21:

1921-22 (West Coast Tour):

West Coast

1922-23:

1923-24:

November	<u>Lars Anders, Jan Anders och deras barn</u>	Chicago
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1924-25 (Second West Coast Tour):

From Nerkingarne (The People of Nerke),
sometimes titled Lasse och Stina (Lasse and Stina)
(scenes and duets)

West Coast

(3-act folk drama with song [1872] by Axel Anrep)

1925-26:

early October	<u>Tre förälskade poliskonstaplar</u> (?) (Three Police Constables in Love)	Galesburg, Ill.
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(1-act comedy with song [1870] by Johan Jolin,
from Trois amours de pompiers by Moreau, Paul S. de
Sancy, and Alfred C. Lartique [1858])

October-Nov.	<u>Tre förälskade poliskonstaplar</u>	Chicago
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October-Nov.	"Officers Three," probably <u>Tre förälskade poliskonstaplar</u>	Grantsburg, Wis.
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1926-27:

Nov. 21, 24, 28, and 29	<u>Pelles misslyckade frieri</u> (Pelle's Unsuccessful Wooing) or <u>Sven fick Svea</u> (Sven got Svea)** (3-act comedy, author unknown)	Chicago
March 1, 2, 6	<u>Lars Anders, Jan Anders och deras barn</u>	Chicago
March 20	"Olle i Skratthult Show Company"--no play title mentioned	New York
April 7	<u>Pelles misslyckade frieri</u>	Chicago

1927-28:

October 6	"Olle i Skratthult Show Comapny"--no play title mentioned	Dawson, MN
November 2, 3	<u>Sme-Olas stora synd</u> (Blacksmith Ola's Great Sin) (3-act folk comedy [1926] by Alfred Ebenhard, Chicago [?])	Chicago
December 9, 11	<u>Sme-Olas stora synd</u>	Chicago
February 9, 11, and 12	<u>Mamsell Sundblad vill gifta sig</u> (Miss Sundblad Wants to Get Married) (1-act comedy [1865] from the French by Bertha Spanier)	Chicago
April 1	<u>Sme-Olas stora synd</u>	New York
April 15	<u>Sme-Olas stora synd</u>	Minneapolis

1928-29:

October 21, 27, and 28	<u>Älskogskranka och giftaslystna</u> (Lovesick and Ready to Wed) (2-act comedy, author unknown)	Chicago
December 15, 16	<u>Värmlänningarna</u> (The People of Värmland) (6-act folk drama with song [1846] by Fredrik August Dahlgren with music by A. Randel)	(Boston***) Chicago
February 13, 17	<u>Per Olsson och hans käring</u> (Per Olsson and His Old Lady) (3-act folk comedy [1894] by Gustaf af Geijerstam)	Chicago)
March 24	<u>Per Olsson och hans käring</u>	Chicago

1929-30:

fall	<u>Madam Andersons hyresgäster</u> (Mrs. Anderson's Lodgers) or <u>Mot beräkning</u> (Against Calculations)** (1-act comedy with song [1871] by Aron Jonason, from <u>Store Bededagsaften</u> , Danish adaptation by F. Jensen from the French)	Dayton, MN(?)
October 24, 26, and 27	<u>I två sjömän och en vacker flicka</u> (Two Sailors and One Beautiful Girl) (1-act (?) farce, author unknown)	Chicago
November 17	<u>Värmlänningarna</u>	Chicago
January 1 (prob.)	<u>Skvallerkäringar</u> (Gossips) (comedy, author unknown, possibly same play as <u>Skvallersystrarna</u> [The Gossipy Sisters], dramatic sketch in 3 acts, [1864] by Johan Jolin)	Minneapolis
February 2, 3, 8	<u>De gamla hänger i</u> (The Old Folks are Hanging In There) (3-act comedy [1927] by Kurt Göransson, Chicago(?))	Chicago
March 8, 9	<u>De gamla hänger i</u>	Chicago

1930-31:

fall	<u>Käringa mi's kusin</u> (My Old Lady's Cousin) (3-act comedy [1929] by Alfred Ebenhard, Chicago [?])	Grand Forks, ND
January 4	<u>Käringa mi's kusin</u>	Minneapolis
January 10, 11, and 18	<u>Käringa mi's kusin</u>	Chicago
June 20, 21	<u>Värmlänningarna</u> ****	Alexandria, MN

*Note that the list is given by seasons, i.e., this date is in the spring of 1920.

**Other title of same play.

***Värmlänningarna opened in Boston, date not known.

****Produced by Twin Cities Dramatic Society, featuring Olga Lindgren-Peterson as Anna and Annar Myhre as Erik, both regular performers with the Olle i Skratthult Company. Olle i Skratthult's band played for the performance.